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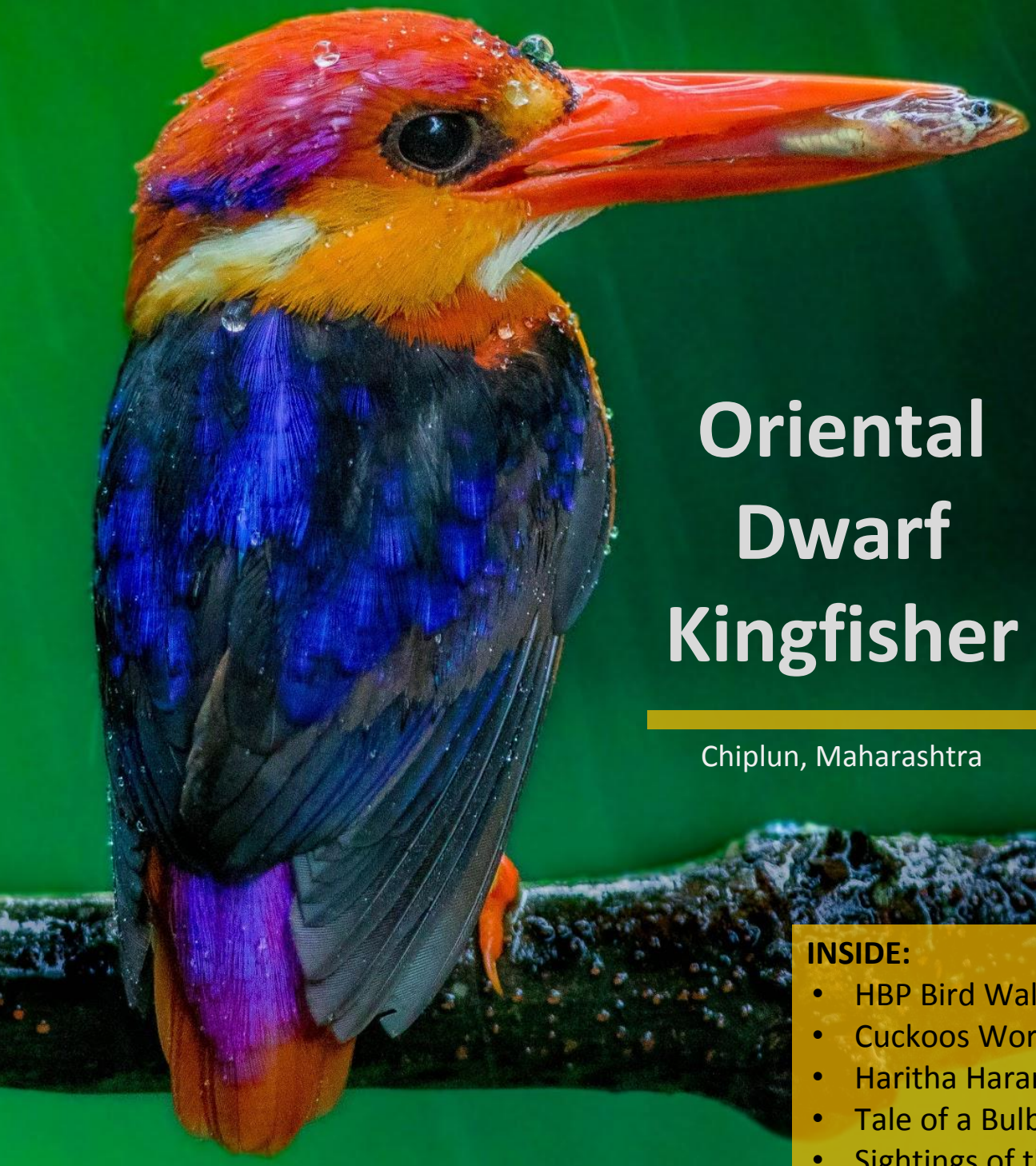
ARANYA

BY

Hyderabad Birding Pals | Friends of Flora & Fauna



Oriental Dwarf Kingfisher

Chiplun, Maharashtra

INSIDE:

- HBP Bird Walks
- Cuckoos Workshop
- Haritha Haram
- Tale of a Bulbul
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A Note To Our Readers

By The Editors

We are happy to bring to you the first issue of AranyA, a magazine of Hyderabad Birding Pals (HBP) and Friends of Flora & Fauna. HBP is a group of bird watching enthusiasts which organises bird walks around Hyderabad as its core activity. These bird walks are not only open for all to participate but also free of charge. We believe the spirit of mutual camaraderie and friendship drives us to give our best, be it in birding or photography. Friends of Flora & Fauna is our sister group for nature lovers.

Through this magazine you'll get to know about all the bird watching events we organise in the month, learn from the experienced members of the group, see the best images our members took and know about our conservation efforts. This will also be a platform for members to showcase their work.

Monsoon rains were no deterrent for events in July. We had five bird walks, a tree plantation event and a bird identification session in this month. A tree plantation drive under the state run program Telangana ku Haritha Haram took place near Ameenpur lake under the mentorship of Mrs. Tejdeep Kaur Menon, DGP at Telangana Special Protection Force . Here, HBP member Pradeep Nair brought to our notice the birds trapped in fishing nets used by farmers to protect their fields around the lake. Discussion is on with the farmers to find a solution. A session on bird identification was a first for us. Keeping in mind the season, the topic of Cuckoos was selected. A trip to Mallelateertham by our members yielded excellent photographs of Oriental Scops Owl and a scientifically important sighting of Madras Treeshrew. This month the quest to spot the Oriental Dwarf Kingfisher led HBP members to the Chiplun forest, Maharashtra.

Through this magazine we intend to share information with our readers and therefore the issue is free for distribution as long as no commercial use is done. Photographers hold the copyright to their images. Hope you will benefit from reading AranyA, we welcome your reviews.

As the famed American artist Robert Henri has said,

Paint the flying spirit of the bird rather than its feathers

we are sure to follow suite on this canvas

ARANYA
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Madras Treeshrew

Do You know?

In India, the southernmost sighting of Green-billed Malkoha is at Gubbala Mangamma temple, Khammam.

This was first sighted by Hyderabad Birding Pals (HBP) members Mr. Sriram Reddy, Mr. Ashis Kumar Pradhan & Mr. Y.S.R.K. Prasad on 20th May 2017.

HBP Bird Walks – July Month

158th Bird Walk | Mir Alam Tank

2nd July 2017

159th Bird Walk | Manjeera Dam, Sangareddy

9th July 2017

160th Bird Walk & Haritha Haram | Ameenpur lake

16th July 2017

161st Bird Walk | Ameenpur Lake

23rd July 2017

162nd Bird Walk | Narsapur Forest

30th July 2017

HBP Bird Walk Sightings – July Month

Mir Alam bird walk

This lake has a unique vegetation (mainly reeds). These change their location in hours with the wind and it becomes a magical thing to witness in monsoons. The Lake has been a stronghold for reed bird population and birds like bitterns and watercock have been previously sighted here.The birdwalk didn't disappoint as Cinnamon Bittern, Yellow Bittern and Black bittern were sighted multiple times. Lots of Red-rumped Swallows, Streak-throated Swallows and Wire-tailed Swallows were present.

Black Bittern

Plain Prinia

Grey Heron

HBP Bird Walk Sightings – July Month

Manjeera WLS Bird Walk

Monsoon is the breeding season for weavers and they can be seen in excellent colours actively building their nests. Three weaver species were observed on the day of the birdwalk namely- Baya weaver, Bengal or the Black-breasted Weaver and the Streaked weaver. To add, all the species of munias were as well noted during the trip namely- Scaly Breasted Munia, Tricoloured Munia, Indian Silverbill and Red Avadavat, which were all seen busily foraging among the reeds and grasses. Continuous calls of Rain Quail were heard on the grassland. The Ruddy-breasted Crake, for a change, delighted the participants by coming out in the open. Besides, there were waterfowls in the reservoir, and the scrub forest presented us with Tickell's Blue-Flycatcher, Brahminy Kite, Pied Cuckoo and Indian Grey Hornbill.

Yellow Eyed Babbler

Black-breasted Weaver

Ruddy-breasted Crake

Tricoloured Munia

Common Kingfisher

Trip Report

By Ajinkya Supekar

Manjeera WLS Bird Walk

Manjeera Wildlife Sanctuary is a riverine wetland 50 km northwest of Hyderabad in Medak district. It is a place with a good number of resident and migratory birds, in addition to being home for the Marsh Crocodile Crocodylus palustris. It is recognized internationally as an Important Bird Area (IBA), due to its rich bird diversity and its high preference by migratory birds.

Every season brings with it unique sightings of birds and this was HBP's motive to organize its 159th birdwalk here. Monsoon is the time for Bitterns, Crakes, Cuckoos and Watercock. Also, it is nice to see the place turn lush green and know about the change in habitat. Eight members participated. It was nice to have Manjula Desai and Avinash Subramanya for their first HBP birdwalk.

Morning 5:30 AM was the meeting time at Allwyn cross roads, Miyapur. We started for the location at quarter to six and met others on the way. The weather was cloudy and humid.

We reached Sangareddy and took a left turn towards the sanctuary, there are crop fields lining the road. Here, there was good activity of Scaly-breasted Munia, Tricoloured Munia and three species of weavers- Baya, Bengal and Streak Throated. Many were in a mixed flock foraging on the tender seeds of paddy. The light was excellent for good shots and the birds were also quite close. Monsoon is a great time to see weavers, they are in excellent colors and actively building their nests. In a bush along the road, Tawny bellied Babblers dashed through it, keenly looking for insects. White-breasted Waterhen, Yellow-eyed Babblers, Asian Pied Starlings, Ashy Prinias and Indian Robins were also seen.

Further ahead, you see a crossroad with a board of the sanctuary. Here we parked the vehicles and looked for Red necked Falcons on the dead tree and the three telephone towers, they were not there. On the right side, there is a mud road leading to a pond. This is where we had seen a large number of migratory birds last winter. This is not the season but was worth checking as many reeds had grown and water had accumulated from recent rains in puddles- perfect for Bitterns and Crakes. On the banks and in water we could see many Gray-headed Swamphens and Eurasian Coot. From the grassland along the pond, Rain Quails were constantly calling.

Trip Report

By Ajinkya Supekar

Locating the source of these calls is a tough task as these are camouflaging small birds. Abhishek and Manoj spotted the quails and got id shots. Meanwhile, a Barred Buttonquail flew for cover when I was a few feet from it. These are also expert in dodging our eye. It didn't fly far, went in a depression in the ploughed field, tucking down in an attempt to hide. Though the verb 'to quail' means to show fear and apprehension, the birds on the contrary are very confident of their ability to hide in the surroundings. You'll almost step on them and not see anything. It flew away as we approached for a photograph. After all this "Quailing" we retired and came back to the bund of the pond. A big flock of Black-tailed Godwits zipped passed us. In the reeds there were three Ruddy-breasted Crakes mostly preferring the cover and occasionally coming out to inspect the open ground. A Intermediate Egrets were in good numbers, all singly busy looking for fish. Lesser Whistling-Ducks, Indian Spot-billed Duck, Oriental Darter, Glossy Ibis, Red-naped Ibis, Bronze-winged Jacana, Asian Openbill, Common Hawk-Cuckoo, Indian Roller, Red-rumped Swallows, Red Avadavat, Indian Silverbill and River Tern were also seen here.

The green patch around habitat orientation center and abandoned houses near the dam yielded Tickell's Blue-Flycatcher, Brahminy Kite, Pied Cuckoo, Little Swift, nesting building Baya Weavers, Oriental Magpie-Robin, Gray-breasted Prinia, White-browed Bulbul, Cotton Pigmy Goose, Wire-tailed Swallow, Rose-ringed Parakeet, Common Kingfisher and Indian Grey Hornbill. The forest was quiet silent. Over the reservoir we saw hundreds of Painted Storks flying high in the sky.

It was a decent bird-walk with nice sightings typical of monsoon. A total of 98 species were reported.

HBP Bird Walk Sightings – July Month

Narsapur forest bird walk

Narsapur forest is a green patch with a lake near Hyderabad. With the resident birds and some interesting sightings. At least four Fork-tailed Drongo Cuckoos were observed and one was photographed sitting on an open perch. A pair of Bonelli's Eagle, Indian Nightjar, Long-tailed Shrike, Jerdon's Leafbird, Barred Buttonquail, and White-naped Woodpecker were some of the major sightings. A total of 92 species were reported.

Paddyfield Pipit

Crested Serpent Eagle

Indian Silverbill

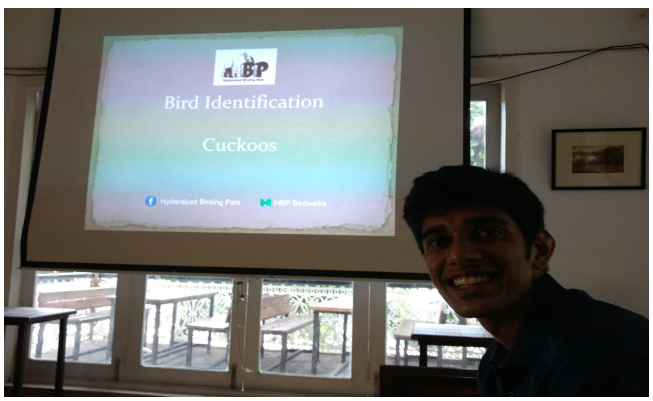
Common Kingfisher

HBP Event – Identifying Cuckoos

This workshop was conducted at Lamakaan on Sunday 2nd July 2017 by Hyderabad Birding Pals. Mr. Abhishek Ravindra conducted the first of its kind workshop on Identification of Cuckoos. What better time to talk about cuckoos during monsoons!

It was a session for the people who are already into birding and for people new to birding. Easy methods to identify each and every cuckoo species found in the region and ways to differentiate it from similar species, behavior and places where the bird can be spotted, a basic starter's introduction to birding were some topics discussed.

The session was attended by people from all walks of life. We were flattered by the presence of Dr. Salim Ali's great grand niece Yahya Bin Ali, she shared with us her memories of the great ornithologist.



HBP members with Dr. Salim Ali's great grandniece Yahya Bin Ali

Tale Of a Bulbul

Ashish Jha
Research Scholar
LaCONES, CCMB

I sneak through the vegetation, balancing my equipment bag on shoulder and tip-toeing to reach close to a bird which I have been following up for couple of weeks. As a PhD researcher, I find my study model very enchanting, a threatened species whose nesting and foraging behaviour I have been recording.

I am talking about a songster, a bird endemic to south India, resident of scrub forests of Eastern Ghats, the not-so-common **Yellow-throated Bulbul**. Like sparrows and crows, Bulbuls are very familiar group of Birds which fills our urban surroundings with avian songs and sometimes cacophony. Unlike threats such as poaching, pet trade, collection of eggs from wild etc. which impinges survival of other Birds, most prominent threat to Bulbuls is loss of habitat. This is a major issue of concern for habitat specialist species such as Yellow-throated Bulbul which are found only in scrub/deciduous forests along the mountain slopes of peninsular India. Yellow-throated Bulbul, a not so showy bird draped in earthly grey, is similar in size to House sparrow with yellow tinge over its head, primaries, tarsus, tail and very prominently yellow throat.

Photo: Sriram Reddy

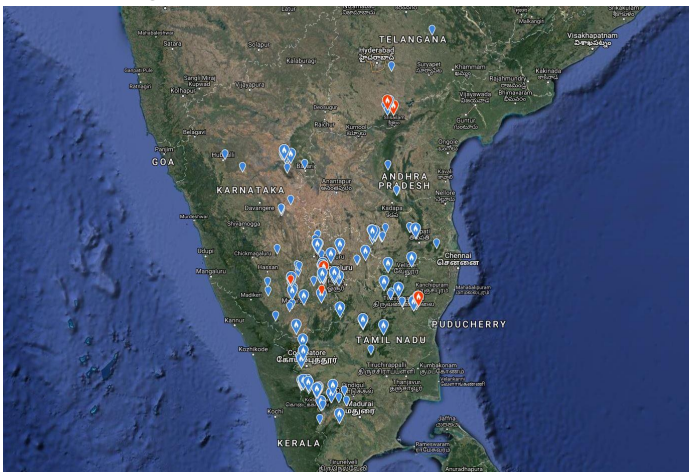
It was year 1845, Thomas Caverhill Jerdon, a british Civil servant posted at Horsley hills (Andhra Pradesh) is visited by a local shikari and is gifted a dead bird. Jerdon, an avid naturalist and an expert on Indian Ornithology immediately realized that it was a species unknown to bird taxonomists. It was named Pycnonotus xantholaemus, the species epithet referring to its yellow-throat (xanthos-laimos).

Cont..

Tale Of a Bulbul

My first view of this bird was at Horsley hills (Andhra Pradesh). After following the calls for hours and eyes scanning every ficus tree and fruiting bush, a sudden burst of melodious tumbling call and a sparrow like bird with yellow tinge flew off my head and I could only get a glimpse of this rare beauty as the bird was not courteous in showing up for a closer admiration instead kept flying in and out of sight only to make me realize- PhD on this species is going to be a difficult journey. However, there are places in Southern India where it is much easier to spot this bird, in places like Umamaheswaram (Telangana), MallelaTheertham (Telangana) and other parts of Amrabad tiger reserve like Shaileshwaram and some unnamed valleys in the tiger reserve. Birds here sometime come close by and do not shy off. It is very delightful to watch every aspect of their daily routine- them foraging on temple ground, their bubbly call on mutual greeting, them being chased by other Bulbul species, one can enjoy watching them preen each other, drink water from the seeping rocky wall.

It is beyond doubt that rarity and declining status of this specialist Bulbul calls for immediate attention, if not alarm. Habitat protection is the best available conservation option for this endemic beauty. To comfort the ecologists, this endemic species is found in few protected areas such as Amarabad Tiger Reserve (Telangana), Chinnar Wildlife Sanctuary (Kerala), Sri Venkateswara Wildlife Sanctuary and National Park (Andhra Pradesh) and Biligiri Rangaswamy Temple Wildlife Sanctuary and Hills (Karnataka) which are expected to give it some relief from widespread decline of its habitat (more locations in the map). Given the patchy distribution and small population size, it is difficult to say for how long such a species can keep hold of its population status and prevent its evident decline. Few local populations such as those at Chamunda Hills and Thondebhavi (Karnataka) have been extirpated while new areas have been colonized such as Rishi-valley School (Andhra Pradesh). New populations are being described, but, how many of these populations are self-sustaining? It is best to gear up and take preventive measures against its eminent decline, and not wait until it reaches brink of extinction.



Telangana Ku Haritha Haram

Telangana ku Haritha Haram is a tree plantation programme of the Telangana State Government. On 16th July 2017 at Ameenpur Lake, volunteers from the Telangana Special Protection Force, HBP members and School children joined to plant trees near the lake. This was done under the mentorship of Mrs. Tejdeep Kaur Menon, DGP at Telangana Special Protection Force .

Most of the plantation is to strengthen the bund and provide shelters for Birds. Indigenous plant varieties like Amla, Jamun and Banyan were planted.The plantation at the Bandam Kommu (a pond closeby) is with a view to provide more nesting for Baya weavers as a roadside fencing has been sanctioned by the Government. HBP members also assisted in informing about the birds seen to the school children and volunteers.

HBP Members

TSPF Volunteers

Photographer's Corner

Painted Francolin

Photographer: Chetan Sai Chowdary Ineni
Place: Himayat Sagar, Hyderabad

© Kalyan Chetan Photography

Photographer's Corner

Naresh Vadrevu

Indian Fox

Photographer: Naresh Vadrevu
Place: Rollapadu, Kurnool

Photographer's Corner

Oriental Dwarf Kingfisher

Photographer: Sriram Reddy
Place: Chiplun, Maharashtra

Photographer's Corner

Madras Treeshrew

Photographer: Ashis Kumar Pradhan
Place: Amrabad Tiger Reserve, Telangana

Madras or Southern Tree shrew is the most commonly found tree shrew in India. Being nocturnal they have good sense of hearing and vision. Tree shrews are well known for their highest brain-to-body mass ratio among vertebrates.

Important Sightings of The Month

This is an adult male Watercock in its breeding plumage. They are secretive and call during the dawn and dusk. Sightings in and around Hyderabad are mostly during monsoon, which is the time when the birds are highly vocal. Hyderabad Birding Pals have observed and reported the presence of this bird at ICRISAT, Ameenpur, Fox Sagar and Edulabad lake.

Watercock ***(Gallicrex cinerea)***
Conservation Status: Least Concern

Pradeep Nair
Ameenpur Lake,Hyderabad

Important Sightings of The Month

Rain quail/ Black breasted quail is a shy bird which is spotted during the monsoons- their breeding season. Understanding their call and behaviour proved to be the key to spot the bird in a vast grassland.

Rain Quail (*Coturnix Coromandelica*)
Conservation Status: Least Concern

Manjula Desai
Himayat Sagar, Hyderabad

Important Sightings of The Month

This scops owl is a vespertine bird with a preference for spiders and insects in its diet. We confirmed the presence of this bird by observing the calls at dusk at multiple locations in Amrabad Tiger Reserve but it remained elusive every time it was searched for. On a rare occasion HBP members were lucky to photograph it in open and in broad daylight.

Oriental Scops Owl (*Otus sunia*)
Conservation Status: Least Concern

Sriram Reddy
Amrabad Tiger Reserve, Telangana

Important Sightings of The Month

The family of cuckoos get their name from the call of this brood parasite. The common/eurasian cuckoo is a summer migrant to this region and is known to target several small birds to nurture their eggs. They are sometimes indicated as determinants of heath and complexity of a biodiversity region.

Eurasian Cuckoo (***Cuculus canorus***)
Conservation Status: Least Concern

Venugopala Rao. V
Serilingampally,Hyderabad

Important Sightings of The Month

This rare bird was seen at an open perch amongst the bamboo during the Narsapur bird walk. It is an interesting morphological mix of two bird species- has the body features of a Drongo with a Cuckoo-like beak. It retains most of the behaviour patterns of a typical Cuckoo.

Fork-tailed Drongo-Cuckoo ***(Surniculus dicruroides)***
Conservation Status: Least Concern

Sundareswaran R
Vetaikorumagan
Narsapur ***Forest***, Medak

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